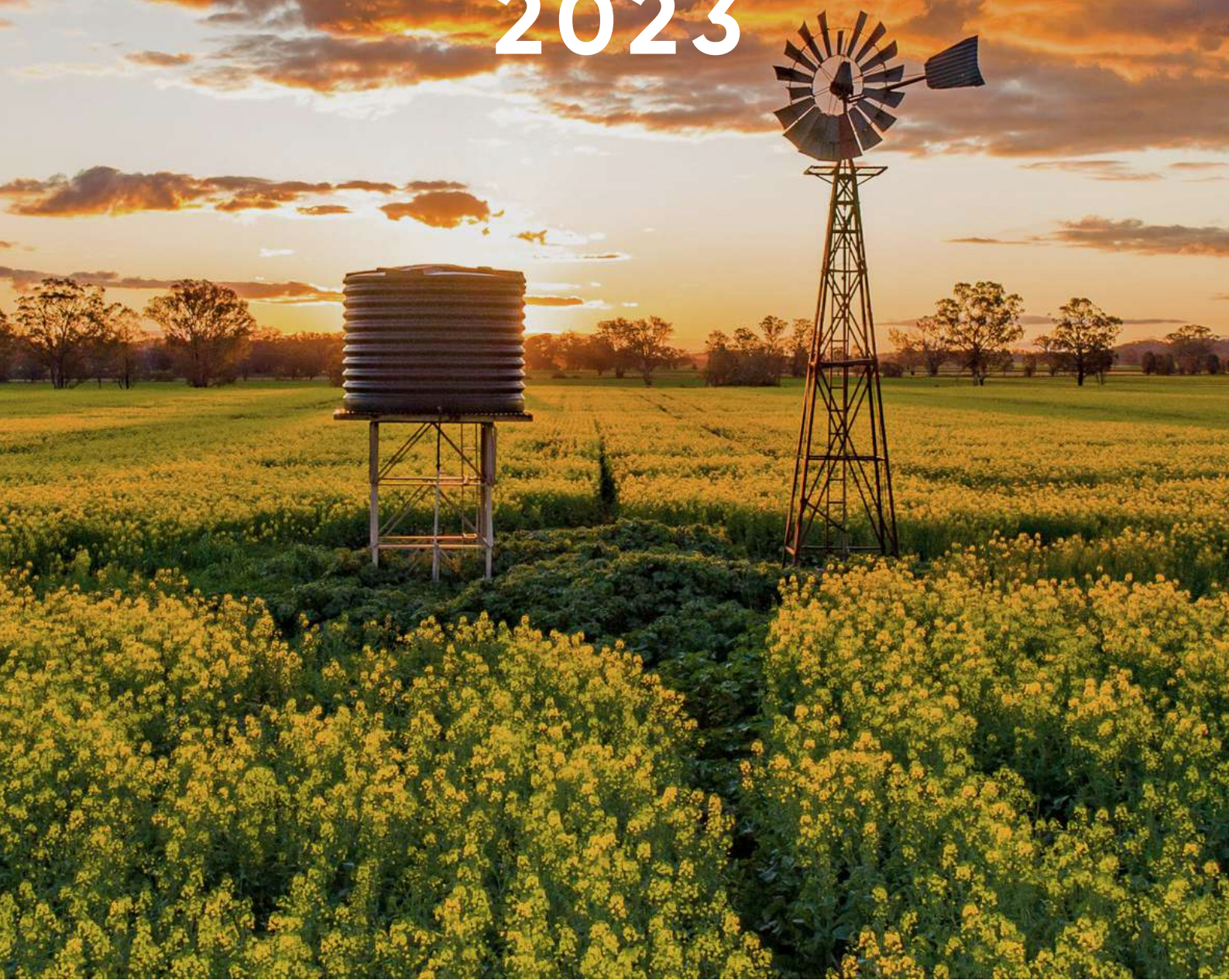




COWRA TOURISM ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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Visit Cowra acknowledges the Wiradjuri People as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and reside, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



The past year has been another jam-packed, demanding year. We keep hoping the year ahead is a “normal” one, but we are getting to the point where we don’t remember what normal is!

Nevertheless, our team, board directors and members have continued to deliver for our visitors, tourism in the region and our community as a whole. Collaborations between our members and our team have brought in substantial additional income to the town, such as through the ‘Winter Wanderlust’ where we saw an estimated additional \$78,000 come into the economy as a result of this campaign.

The floods presented a huge challenge – to the tourist offerings, perceptions and Visitor Centre. A huge congratulations must go to our team, particularly Kurt, Karen and Stassi for overseeing the quick removal of hazardous items following the flood, allowing the VIC to be reopened in a few days, and then the massive renewal of the centre.

Also a big thank you to the amazing volunteers who helped out during the flood, including the incredible Rapid Relief Team, Cowra Lions Club, Cowra Youth Council, Lindy Amery from the Japanese Garden Cafe, Lusi Austin, Oliver and Harry Beaumont, and Matt Mcillhatton from the Country Gardens Motor Inn for generously loaning his trailer to help with the cleanup efforts.

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR – CONTINUED

I'd also like to extend a special thank you to two very special people; Rose Sutor and Julie Stephenson who have generously given up their time to volunteer at the Visitor Information Centre.

We are extremely proud of the Destination Management Plan developed in collaboration with our members, Cowra Shire Council and surrounding region which sets out our ambitions and plans for the next three years.

This has provided us the framework to develop a structured annual operational plan to drive our work.

Thank you to all the members who continue to support Cowra Tourism and work together to provide such a fantastic visitor experience in the Cowra region.

Erin Watt
Chair
Cowra Tourism Corporation



A WORD FROM THE TOURISM MANAGER



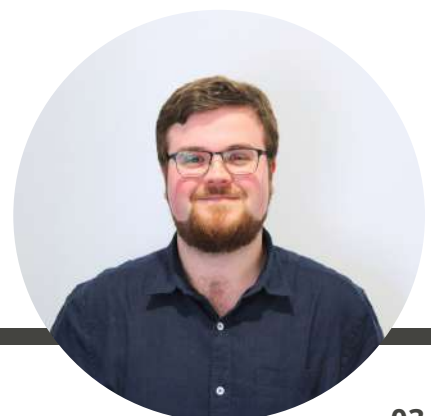
To say our time has been challenging since the November flood would be quite an understatement. The task of rebuilding was a monumental one and was not achieved without the blood, sweat, and tears of our incredible team and the support of our board of directors and Cowra Shire Council.

However, at this stage in 2023, I can confidently say that we are back and better than ever, with a new look, an organisational structure built on strong foundations, and a plan to grow and diversify Cowra's visitor economy over the coming years.

We look forward to making massive strides towards our goals as a region over the next 12 months in collaboration with our members.

We have some exciting announcements and projects coming up and we can't wait to share them all with you.

Kurt Overzet
Tourism Manager
Cowra Tourism Corporation



DESTINATION MANAGEMENT & PLANNING



THE COWRA DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

In March this year we released the 2023–2026 Cowra Destination Management Plan.

This document is our key overarching plan for Cowra as a tourism destination over the next three years, aligning with the Central West Destination Management Plan and the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030.

The plan was developed through consultation with members and key stakeholders, focusing on six key themes to build upon and diversify Cowra’s visitor economy.

1. Visitor Servicing: Putting the visitor first
2. Innovative Destination Marketing
3. Facilitation & Advocacy
4. Turning Opportunities into Strengths
5. Enhancing & Showcasing our Strengths
6. Event Tourism

The full Cowra Destination Management Plan is available upon request from Cowra Tourism.

REINVIGORATING OUR INFORMATION CENTRE



FLOOD RECOVERY

After a long and arduous process, we can happily say that the flood recovery for the Cowra Visitor Information Centre is complete... But we're not done just yet!

A refreshed space has inspired us to explore the possibilities of our centre's potential. We will soon have a plan to further revamp the Centre to serve as a versatile tourism experience that is the perfect introduction to our region, our history, and our operators.

WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE?

- An audit of the new space to be conducted by Carol B. Retail Revamp. This will be used to create a plan for developing the Visitor Information Centre for the future.
- A dedicated multimedia display for Cowra's Wiradjuri history & culture.
- A new wine tasting area.
- A revamp of the Centre's POW Exhibition area.

MARKETING



THE HIGHLIGHTS

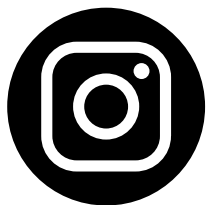


80,000 website users with over 150,000 pageviews on the Visit Cowra website, up 15% year-on-year.



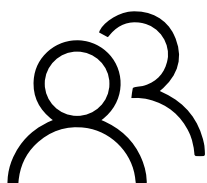
2,000,000 Facebook page impressions, up 170% year-on-year.

111,000 engaged Facebook users, up 51% year-on-year.



330,000 Instagram Impressions, up 43% year-on-year.

25,000 engaged Instagram users, up 113% year-on-year.



Canberra visitation increased by 15% year-on-year.

MARKETING



SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

This year we put Cowra front-and-centre on the big screen for the 70th Sydney Film Festival with a brand new advert targeted at the Sydney market.

Our ad played on a huge cinema screen in Martin Place to an estimated audience of over 1 million viewers throughout the festival period.



MARKETING



'COME OUT, WE'RE OPEN' FLOOD RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

Thanks to generous Destination NSW funding attained through the Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO), we were able to deliver (alongside the full regional campaign) a targeted campaign aimed at dispelling visitor concerns surrounding flooding in and around the region.

The Cowra campaign (predominantly aimed at the Canberra & Sydney markets) was a huge success, reaching 400,000 people across social media and print content.

This is on top of the huge Central NSW regional campaign that ran across the Sydney Morning Herald, Traveller.com.au, Prime 7, Urban List, and social media.



EVENTS



BRINGING THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL BACK TO KENDAL STREET

After 2 years without a Christmas Festival on Kendal Street due to the pandemic, it was an honour and a privilege to bring the event back in 2022 to such immense support from the community.

In partnership with Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Information & Neighbourhood Centre, and Business Cowra, we saw over 5,000 people take to the main street to enjoy a magical evening of late-night shopping, live music featuring the incredible Mahalia Barnes, delicious food, and the CINC Christmas Wonderland.



EVENTS



COWRA WINTER WANDERLUST

We were thrilled to bring the Cowra Wine Show on board to be part of the 2nd ever Cowra Winter Wanderlust event in July this year.

Our aim for the event has been to create a true 'Cowra Wine Show Weekend', maximising the incredible event's impact on the local economy by collaborating and hosting events throughout the region to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more with local businesses.

The Winter Wanderlust Weekend brought in an estimated \$78,000 to the local economy, a fantastic result we will look to build on for next year.



EVENTS



CANOLA SEASON

Cowra's incredible fields of gold never fail to amaze, and this year was certainly no exception!

Cowra Tourism once again ran the very popular 'Fields of Gold' Canola Tours with Allan Vorias from Ideal Tours Cowra, giving visitors a safe and memorable agritourism experience. With over 100 tour tickets sold it's safe to say that this season was a resounding success.

After such high demand last year, we also teamed up with local flight school FlyOz to offer scenic canola flights, a perfect opportunity to experience Cowra's picturesque countryside from above.



REPRESENTING THE REGION



TRADE TRAVEL EXPO

Having our incredible region front-and-centre when it comes to the all-important tour group market is a key focus for us as we aim to achieve sustainable and consistent visitation spend throughout the year.

We were thrilled to have the opportunity to present our region to over 150 Sydney Probus Clubs at the 2023 Trade Travel Expo back in May this year.

The overwhelming response in both bookings and feedback confirmed the need for us as destination managers to focus on packages and enhancing bookability for our tourism product.

ILLAWARRA CARAVAN CAMPING LIFESTYLE EXPO

In addition to our annual appearance at the Canberra show, the team trialled a Cowra exhibition at the Illawarra show this year, bringing along some of our members and showcasing the region's best assets to the Illawarra market.

Overall the event was successful, we estimate we had between 4,000 - 5,000 visitors through our exhibit, taking a total of 1,125 visitor guides, and purchasing thousands worth of Cowra product, despite being unable to sell Cowra wine due to the exclusive bar rights at the venue.

TEAM RESTRUCTURE & CAPACITY BUILDING



STAFFING

Earlier this year we had two major staffing changes take place to solidify a functional and efficient structure for our organisation going forward.

With the appointment of Karen Beaumont as Assistant Manager - Events & Visitor Services, and Stassi Austin as our Full-time Marketing Officer, we set the rest of our year up for success, ensuring that we are in a position to offer consistency and quality for our members, visitors, and the Cowra community.

INVESTING IN SKILLS

To continue providing the best value to our visitors, members, and the Cowra community, it's important that we stay up-to-date and identify regular opportunities for our team to upskill.

Earlier this year, Stassi and Karen completed the rEVENTS Academy 7 Week Event Management Training. This will enable our staff to better assist with not only our own events like the Christmas Festival and Winter Wanderlust, but assist local event organisers in maximising the value and success of their events.

Cowra Tourism has also received funding from Destination Central West through the CNSWJO to take part in the Regional Tourism Australia (RTA) Local Government Professional Development Training Program, focusing heavily on destination management for regional Australia.

INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE



WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT

Over the next 2 months we will be busy undertaking a much-needed redevelopment of the Visit Cowra website, completely overhauling its functionality and amalgamating our existing websites into a one-stop-shop for prospective visitors to the Cowra Region.

The new site will be seamlessly integrated with our Central Booking System powered by Bookeasy, allowing visitors to make realtime bookings for Cowra accommodation, tours, and experiences directly from the Visit Cowra website.

We will also redevelop our e-commerce store to include produce, souvenirs, and books in addition to our existing wine offerings. This will go hand-in-hand with the launch of the Cowra Wine Club, a subscription-based model aimed at increasing wine sales and improving our marketing database.

VISITOR ANALYTICS

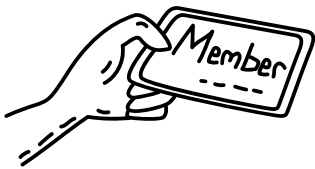
For the past 6 months we've partnered with data analytics company Localis to gain further insight into our visitors to better inform marketing decisions and measure success for marketing activities and events.

Taking a data-driven approach to destination marketing and events means we're able to see the real-time results of our work and deliver insights that give us a true indication of who our visitors are and what markets we should be tapping into.

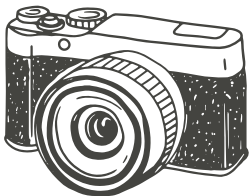
DELIVERING VALUE FOR OUR MEMBERS



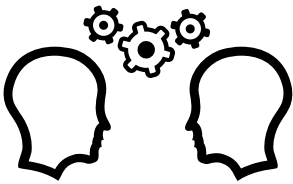
MEMBERSHIP



We've grown our membership base by 7% already this financial year and we're not done yet!



We've added complementary business photography to Business & Accommodation Memberships



We've added complementary 1-on-1 social media coaching and website audits to our Business & Accommodation Memberships



We have been visiting members all across the region. Let us come to you! Familiarisation visits are a great opportunity to help us better sell your business to visitors.

